

Cafeteria Chronicles: District of Columbia Bilingual Charter School

When the **District of Columbia (DC) Bilingual Charter School** in Washington, DC decided to enhance their meal program, they knew staff training would be necessary. Using resources from Wellness in the Schools (WITS) they hosted “Cook Camps” twice a year for staff to learn scratch cooking and recipe development. A priority in the recipe development process was to feature local produce such as collard greens, peas and carrots to name a few.

Knowing student taste preferences would also need to be considered, the district created a School Food Council. The council was composed of 3rd and 4th grade students who were able to taste recipes, provide feedback, and test the recipes again, all before the entire student body was introduced to the recipes.

Check out DC Bilingual Charter School’s scratch prepared meals in this [video](#).

Here are two of the new scratch recipes the staff developed:

Coconut Collard Greens



A vegan recipe made with collard greens in coconut milk and spices.

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Diced Turkey with Peas and Carrots



A protein-rich entree made with local turkey, peas and carrots.

When students were asked to rate the recipes, 75% of students and staff rated these new dishes positively and participation rates increased by 10%!

In addition to creating new scratch-prepared recipes, students were able to participate in a weekly class called "Food Lab." Similar to other special classes such as art and music, Food Lab gave students hands-on experience with cooking and food science. Topics such as ingredients, flavor profiles, and the importance of nutrition were explored during Food Lab classes.

As a result of their efforts to enhance their meal program, the district was awarded the **Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals Recognition Award**, as part of Action for Healthy Kids' (AFHK) Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Awards.

Congratulations to the team at DC Bilingual Charter School for their hard work transforming school meals!

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